$2.95 $3.95 Canada Issue #8

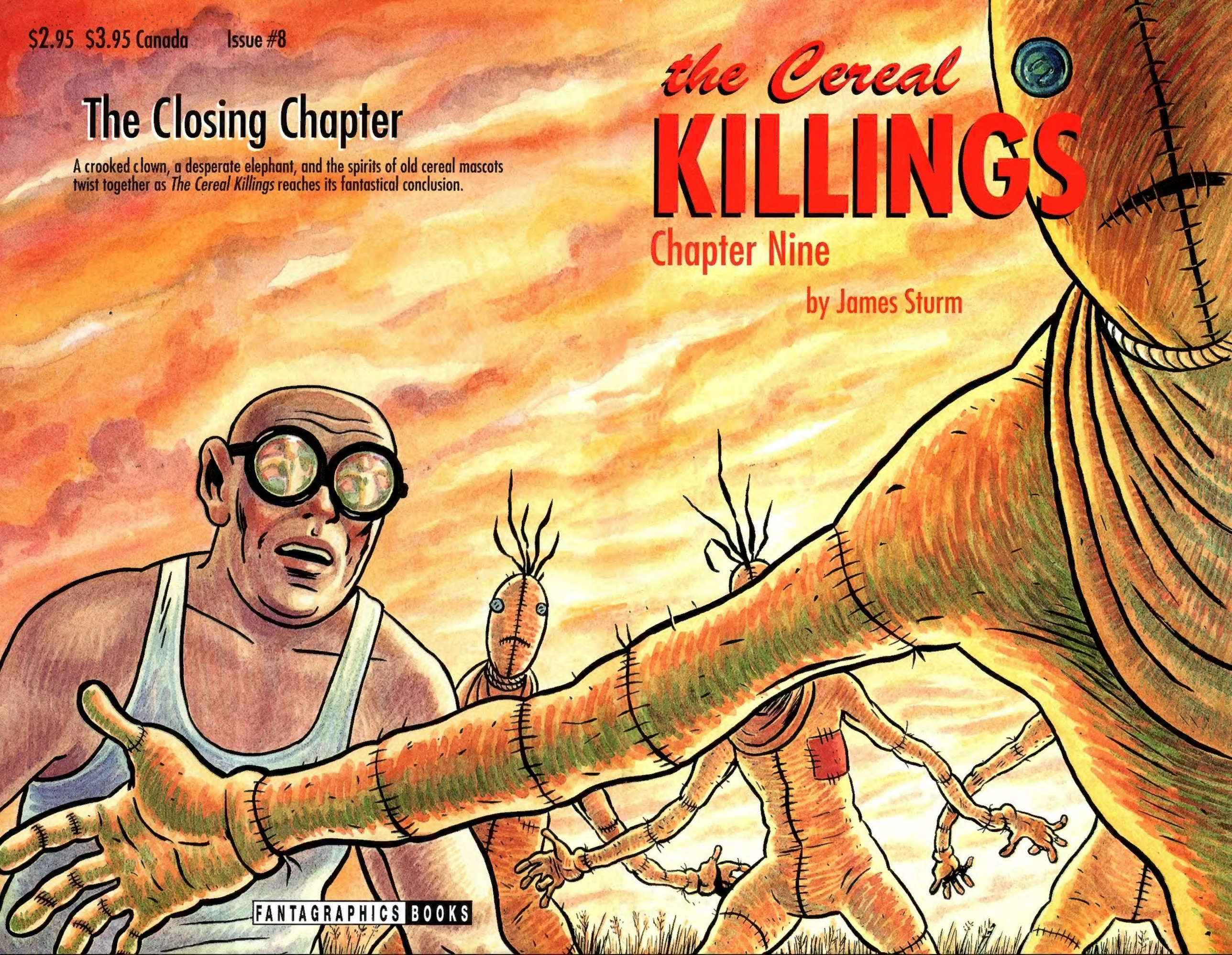
The Closing Chapter

A crooked clown, a desperate elephant, and the spirits of old cereal mascots twist together as *The Cereal Killings* reaches its fantastical conclusion.

the Cereal KILLINGS

Chapter Nine

by James Sturm

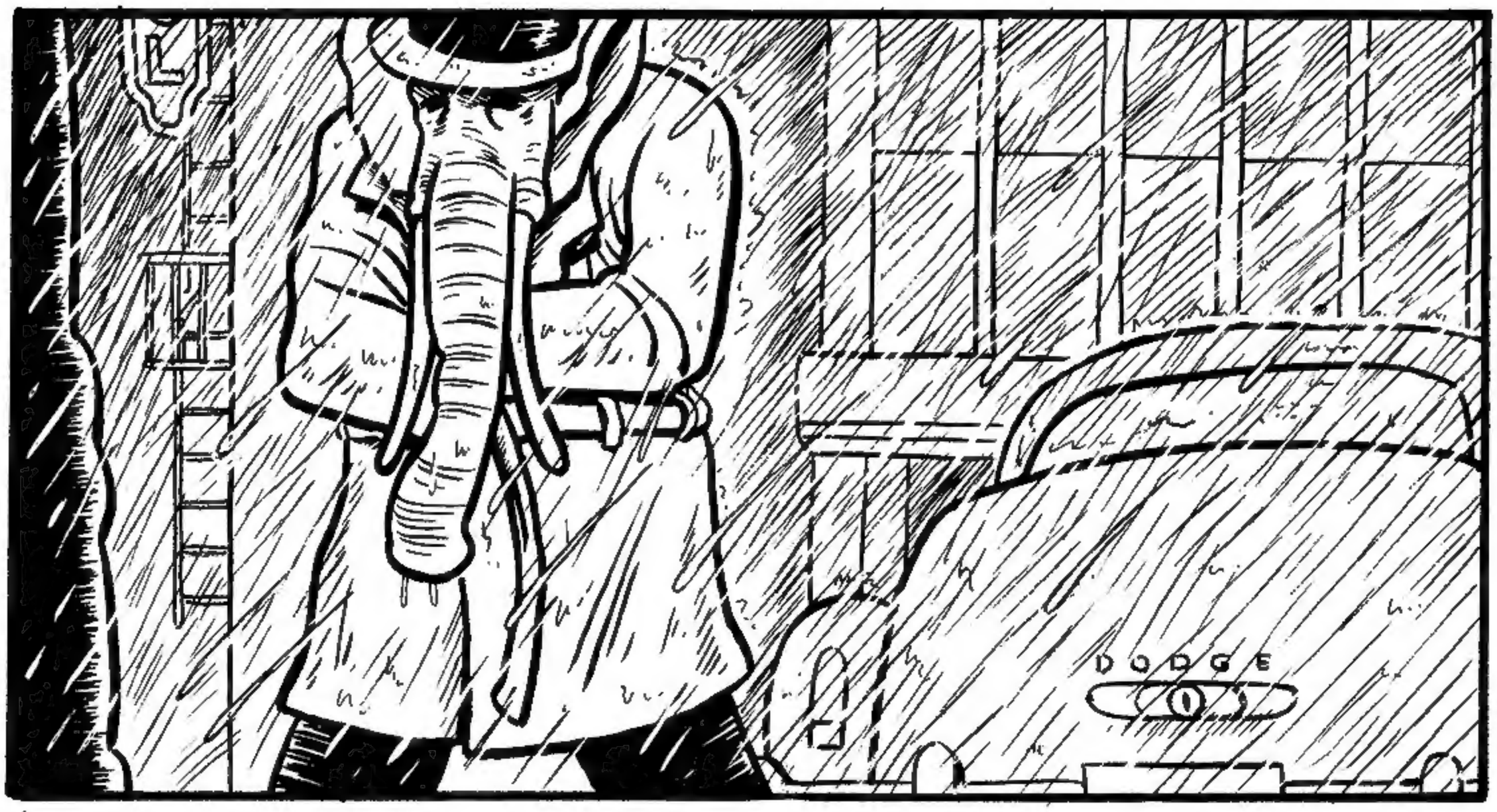


FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

Chapter Nine

TESTAMENT

The Cereal Killings #8 September, 1995. *The Cereal Killings* is published by Fantagraphics Books, Inc., and is copyright © 1995 Fantagraphics Books. All characters, stories, and art © 1995 James Sturm. Cover color by Mark Laug. No part of this magazine may be reproduced without written permission from Fantagraphics Books. No similarities between any of the names, characters, persons, and institutions in *The Cereal Killings* and those of any living or dead persons is intended, and any such similarity that may exist is purely coincidental. Letters to *The Cereal Killings* become the property of the magazine and are assumed intended for publication in whole or in part, and may therefore be used for those purposes. First printing: September, 1995 Fantagraphics Books, 7563 Lake City NE, Seattle WA 98115. Send for our free full color catalogue.


DODGE

SCHMEDLY!
SCHMEDLY!

LISTEN, LARRY, I'M SORRY YOU GOT FIRED, BUT YOU GOT TO LEAVE ME ALONE ...
THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO FOR YOU.

SAVE YOUR OWN HIDE AND TO HELL WITH ME-IS THAT IT!?!
YOU OWE ME, MAN!

YOU KNOW IT WASN'T LIKE THAT...
DON'T LIE TO MY FACE— I MAY HAVE LOST MY JOB BUT I STILL GOT PRIDE!

I'M SORRY...

I TALKED TO BILLY FRAZIER— I SET SOMETHING UP..

I CAN'T...

WE'RE JUST TALKING A FEW SKIDS— IT'LL BE LIKE MY SEVERANCE PAY...

I DON'T KNOW...

CUT THE POWER FOR THE FENCE AND LIGHTS, YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE TO BE THERE...

LOOK AT ME, SCHMEDLY, I NEED YOUR HELP... I'M A FAMILY MAN...

I'M DESPERATE... I'M BEGGING YOU...

I'M DOING INVENTORY FRIDAY NIGHT, I'LL BE WORKING WITH SOMEONE. NO ONE SHOULD COME BEFORE 3:00AM.

AND REMEMBER— I KNOW NOTHING ABOUT THIS...

I KNEW YOU WOULDNT LET ME DOWN!

YOU'RE A SAINT— A GODDAMN SAINT!

FRIDAY NIGHT

HELLO?

DAVE? IT'S ABOUT TIME.

IT'S NOT DAVE.

HE CALLED IN SICK.

I'LL GIVE YOU A HAND.

THIS IS GOING TO TAKE ALL NIGHT.

ARE YOU SURE?

I WOULD NOT HAVE OFFERED OTHERWISE.

WHEW! WE GOT THAT DONE QUICK.
IT'S ONLY MIDNIGHT.

CAN I OFFER YOU A NIP?
NO THANKS.
SUIT YOURSELF.

SO HOW'S LIFE AS A BIG CEREAL STAR?
IT IS...CONFUSING.
YOU HAVE A GOOD LAWYER?

THAT'S NOT IT. IT'S THE PEOPLE I HAVE MET HERE.
HOW SO?

THEY FORGET AND IGNORE THE MOST OBVIOUS— INSTEAD OF GODS THEY FILL THEIR MINDS WITH TRASH.

GODS DO NOT ENTICE, THEY HAVE THEIR BEING AND NOTHING ELSE.

AN OVERFLOW OF BEING.

I TOO NOW FIND MYSELF FORGETFUL.

AND AFRAID.

I'M NOT SURE I UNDERSTAND.

WHEN I FIRST CAME TO KELCOG I FANCIED MYSELF AS A MESSENGER.

I BELIEVED THAT CORN CEREAL WOULD NOURISH THE BODY AND THE WORDS ON THE BOX WOULD NOURISH THE SOUL.

I WAS TOLD THAT I WOULD BE ABLE TO SPREAD MY MESSAGE TO MILLIONS.

I THOUGHT THAT MOVING TO THE CITY WAS A SMALL PRICE TO PAY TO BE ABLE TO TOUCH SO MANY LIVES...

BUT IT'S A TWO WAY STREET. I WAS NOT PREPARED FOR THE STRAIN OF ALL THOSE LIVES TOUCHING ME.

HOW SO?

AS I SAID, SO MANY OF THEIR MINDS ARE FILLED WITH TRASH— THEIR WORDS DISORIENT AND MAKE NO SENSE...

I WAS LAYING DOWN PIPES IN THIS TOWN BEFORE ANY OF THIS WAS BUILT— BUT YOU DON'T SEE THE PIPES THEY'RE FORGOTTEN 'CAUSE THEY'RE BURIED BUT THEY'RE DOING THEIR JOB, SO DON'T COUNT YOUR CHICKEN BEFORE THEY HATCH...

WHAT WILL BECOME OF US WHEN OUR WORDS ARE MEANINGLESS AND EMPTY?

YIPBIDIBOO! SUGAR BONKERS!

PUTS A BONK IN YOUR BREAKFAST BOWL!!

SUGA BONK

TODAY SNIP TOLD ME THAT I WILL NO LONGER BE WRITING THE COPY TO MY CEREAL.

HE SAYS IT DOES NOT REFLECT THE BUOYANT KELCOG SPIRIT.

WELL, DOES IT?

IT REFLECTS THE LORD'S SPIRIT.

NOW I'M A MESSENGER WITHOUT A MESSAGE, PROFITING FROM A PRODUCT WITHOUT SUBSTANCE.

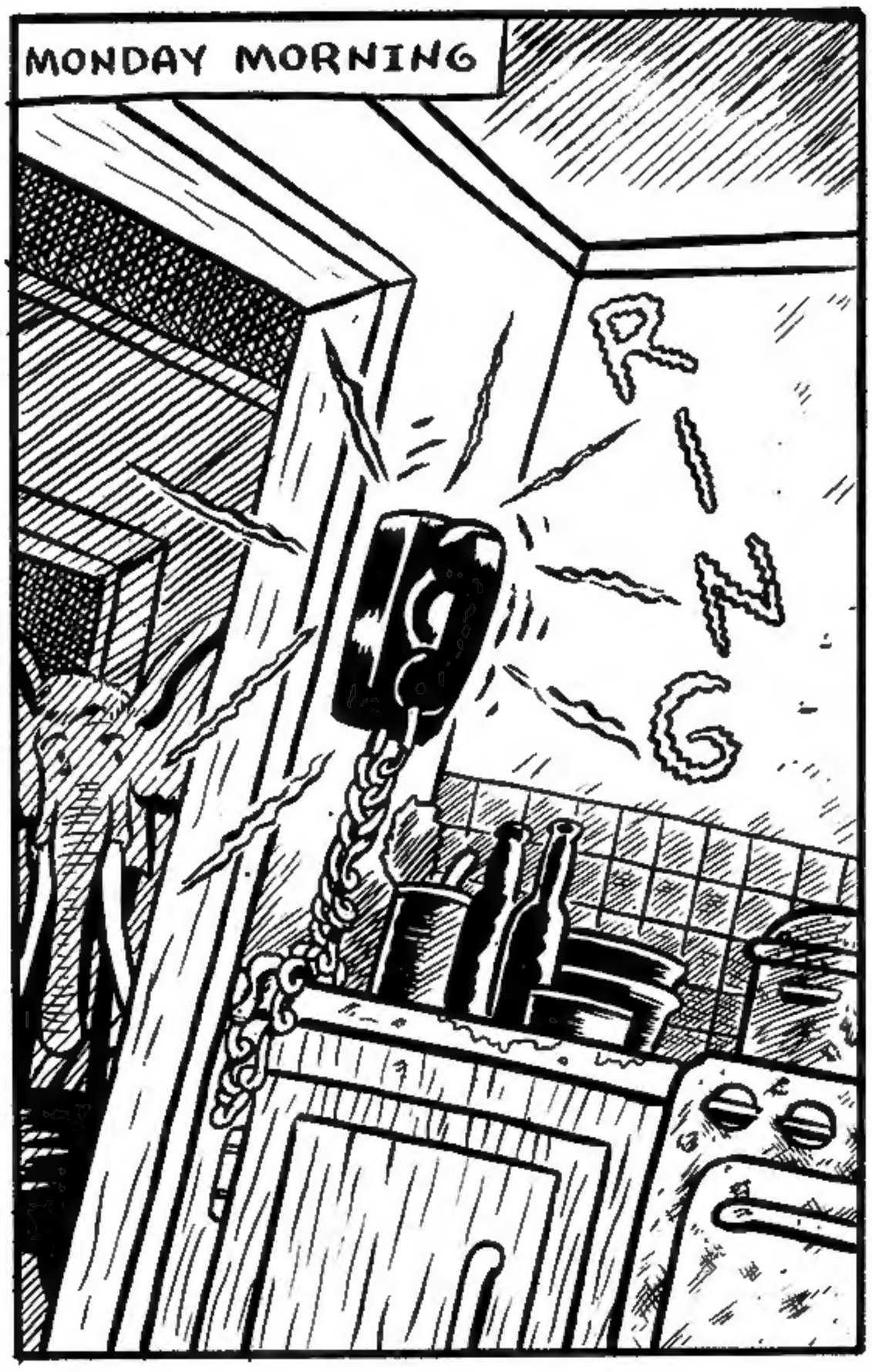
I CALL THAT STEALING.

I FEEL LIKE I'M BEING DRAWN INTO A BLACK HOLE.

...WELL... ANYWAY...
THANKS FOR HELPING OUT TONIGHT.

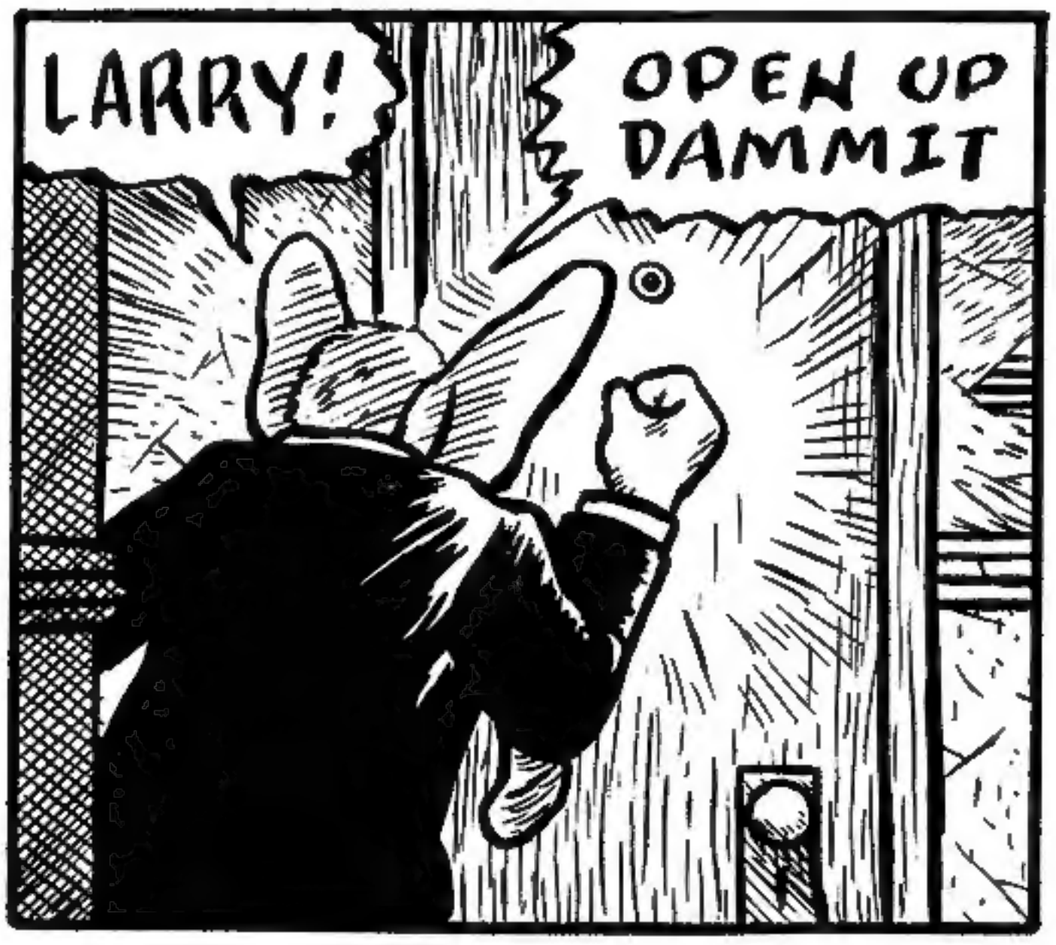
I'M GOING TO LOCK UP THEN HEAD HOME FOR SOME SHUT-EYE.

C'MON, LET ME GIVE YOU A RIDE.


MONDAY MORNING

HELLO?
WHAT!?!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN "CLEANED OUT!?!"

DID YOU CALL THE MAIN OFFICE...?
WELL DON'T. I'LL TAKE IT FROM HERE.


LARRY!
OPEN UP DAMMIT

WHAT THE HELL!?! I GOT A FAMILY SLEEPIN' IN HERE! SHOW SOME FRIGGIN' RESPECT.

LARRY, WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED!? THE WAREHOUSE JUST CALLED— THEY WERE CLEANED OUT, EVERY-THING— FORKLIFTS AND ALL!

SO WHAT? WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO ABOUT IT? I WAS FIRED, REMEMBER?

WE HAD A DEAL. A FEW SKIDS— THAT WAS ALL...

DON'T LECTURE ME ABOUT DEALS! YOU SOLD ME OUT, YOU RAT!

I'M JUST LOOKING OUT FOR NUMBER ONE, JUST LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE! NOW GET THE HELL OUT OF MY HALLWAY BEFORE I CALL THE COPS!!!

SLAM

KNOCK
KNOCK

KELCOG CO.
403

COME IN

I NEED TO TALK WITH YOU, UMM...

I HAVE ALREADY BEEN INFORMED.

I SWEAR...
I DON'T KNOW NOTHING ABOUT THIS...

SIT DOWN.

LET US DISCUSS THIS MATTER.

I RUN A PROSPEROUS BUSINESS BECAUSE I AM ABLE TO MAKE SOUND DECISIONS.

SOUND DECISIONS CAN ONLY BE MADE IF ONE IS SUPPLIED WITH SUFFICIENT INFORMATION.

THE MORE INFORMATION THE SOUNDER THE DECISION.

TO GAIN THIS INFORMATION, TO STAY ON TOP, ONE MUST RISE EARLIER AND WORK LATER THAN THE COMPETION.

THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR HARD WORK.

THAT IS WHY I HAVE ONLY CONTEMPT FOR THOSE WHO BELIEVE THERE ARE SHORT-CUTS TO SUCCESS.

OPPORTUNISTS! FADDISTS! THIEVES!

ANY SUCCESS THEY HAVE WILL MOST CERTAINLY BE SHORT LIVED.

LARRY WAS ROTTEN TO THE CORE... BUT YOU, SCHMEDLY, I BELIEVE TO BE A GOOD MAN.

DESERVING OF ANOTHER CHANCE...

WHICH IS WHY YOU KEPT YOUR JOB.

LISTEN TO ME CLOSELY BECAUSE I SHALL ONLY ASK YOU THIS ONCE.

YOUR REPLY WILL NOT ONLY DETERMINE YOUR FUTURE WITH THIS COMPANY...

BUT MAY ALSO AFFECT THE QUALITY OF YOUR LIFE FOR MANY YEARS TO COME.

WHAT HAPPENED THIS WEEKEND AT THE WAREHOUSE?

I WENT TO THE WAREHOUSE FRIDAY NIGHT. DETERMINED TO ACCOUNT FOR EVERY BOX OF CEREAL.

DAVE O'MALLEY WAS SUPPOSED TO HELP. HE CALLED IN SICK.

THE SCARECROW SHOWED UP INSTEAD.

...AND COME TO THINK OF IT HE WAS ACTING REAL *MYSTERIOUS.*

WHEN WE FINISHED HE WANTED TO STAY— OF COURSE I *INSISTED* HE LEAVE WITH ME.

BUT HE DIDN'T WANT A RIDE HOME—DROPPED HIM OFF AT THE BUS DEPOT A MILE FROM THE WAREHOUSE.

JESUS H CHRIST!

DAMN! HOW CAN I BE SO DUMB!

I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN HE WAS UP TO SOMETHING.

WHEN I GOT THE CALL THIS MORNING AND WAS TOLD ABOUT THE ROBBERY...

HONEST TO GOD... I WAS SHOCKED!

THAT'S ALL I KNOW.

EARLY THAT EVENING

ON LUCKY'S

HEY, SPORT, GETTING AN EARLY START ON THE WEEK, HUH?

MIKEY, GET ME A BEER!

YEA, WELL, IT'S BEEN A LONG DAY.

YOU AND ME BOTH. WHEWE THE BEGINNING OF THE END!

YEA, HOW SO, CHARLIE?

FOR STARTERS **GEORGE** GOT HIS OWN CEREAL. **GEORGE**!! CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?

...OH...

GEORGE AIN'T NO TOP BANANA— NEVER WILL BE!

AHHH. TO HELL WITH HIM!! IT AIN'T WORTH IT.

THE SCARECROW WAS CANNED TODAY, TOO.

HE WAS?

HOW COME?

WHAT DID YOU HEAR?

I SAW HIM CLEANING OUT HIS DESK AS I LEFT THE OFFICE. THAT'S ALL I KNOW.

THEY COME AND THEY GO, HUH, SCHMEDLY?

A TOAST! TO YOU AND ME— *STICKING IT OUT!*

YOU'RE DAMN RIGHT!

GLUG.

WE'RE STILL STANDING, AREN'T WE, CHARLIE!

SURE... SURE WE ARE.

YOU ALRIGHT THERE, SPORT?

ALRIGHT?! C'MON, CHARLIE, WE'LL CLOSE THIS PLACE DOWN!

LOOKING OUT FOR NUMBER ONE!

WHOOOOOOOOOO...

ARE YOU O.K.? SCHMEDLY?

I'M O.K., I'M O.K...

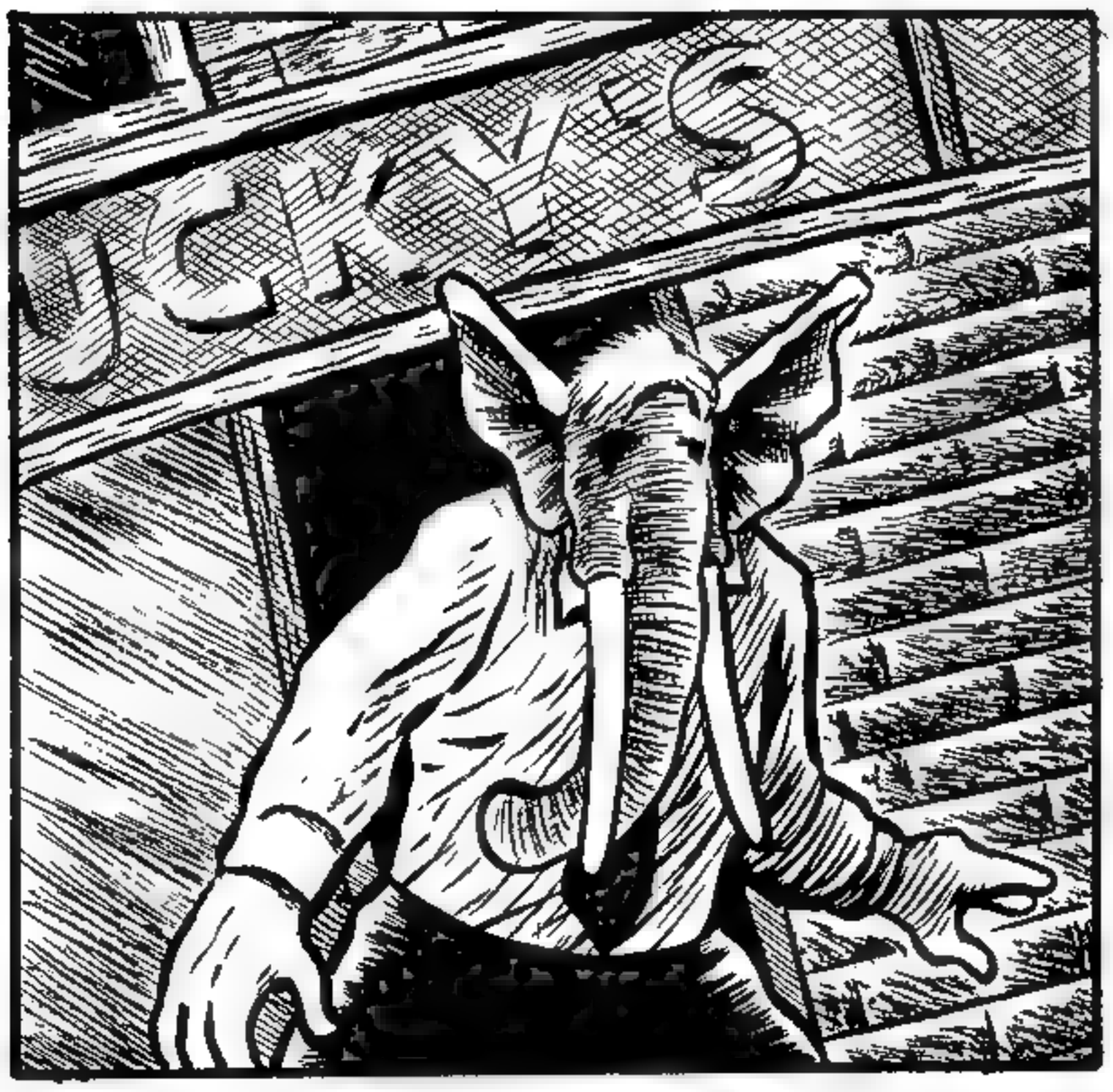
WANT ME TO CALL YOU A CAB?

NO...I JUST NEED SOME AIR...

ARE YOU SURE?

THANKS, CHARLIE, I'M FINE NOW.

I'LL SEE YOU AT THE OFFICE TOMORROW...



SCHMEDLY!

OVER HERE!

CAN WE TALK?

I GOT NOTHING TO SAY TO YOU!

PLEASE...

DON'T TOUCH ME!!

TWAP

RIIIIIIIP

THUK

THUK
THUK
THUK

THUK

ARE YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT US TO ORDER IN ANY FOOD FOR YOU?

NO, I'M NOT HUNGRY

SHOULD WE CALL THE POLICE AGAIN?

I'M SURE THEY'LL CALL AS SOON AS THEY HEAR SOMETHING.

THE LONGER HE'S MISSING THE MORE LIKELY THAT SOMETHING'S HAPPENED.

HE'S ONLY BEEN GONE SINCE THIS MORNING...

THAT'S OVER 12 HOURS, FRANK!

CARBUNKLE NEVER JUST DISAPPEARS.

HE'D AT LEAST CALL!

I KNEW SOMETHING WAS A MATTER WITH HIM! WHY DIDN'T I DO SOMETHING?

I THINK WE ALL FEEL THAT WAY, BRENDA...

MAYBE THAT'S HIM NOW!

HELLO?!...NO... HE'S STILL NOT BACK.

YES, I'LL CALL AS SOON AS I HEAR ANYTHING.

WHO WAS THAT?

CHARLIE KESSLER. HE'S CALLED A FEW TIMES TODAY.

WHEN HE HEARD CARBUNKLE WAS MISSING HE BECAME VERY UPSET.

I DIDN'T KNOW THOSE TWO WERE TIGHT.

I REMEMBER CARBUNKLE SAYING HE WAS HOPING CHARLIE COULD HELP HIM FIND THAT SCARECROW.

MAYBE CARBUNKLE'S WITH THE SCARECROW NOW...

BUT WHO KNOWS WHERE THAT IS?

MAYBE CHARLIE.

CHARLIE? HE DOESN'T EVEN KNOW WHERE HE IS.

MAYBE CHARLIE DOES KNOW SOMETHING.

WHY DOESN'T ONE OF US GO UP AND TALK TO CHARLIE, HE'S ONLY THIRTY MILES AWAY.

MAYBE CHARLIE CAN PROVIDE US WITH SOME CLUES.

IT'S WORTH A SHOT, HUH? I'LL GO... I'M GETTING RESTLESS JUST STANDING AROUND...

DON'T WORRY, BRENDA, WE'LL FIND HIM— *WHEREVER HE IS.*

I'M BACK, SCHMEDLY.

AND I FOUND HIM

I FOUND THE SCARECROW.

HE'S WAITING FOR ME ISN'T HE?

WHY WOULD HE BE?

BECAUSE I KILLED HIM.

IF THAT'S TRUE...

THEN I JUST RETURNED FROM HEAVEN.

SUNNYSIDE MANOR
NURSING HOME

KNOCK

KNOCK
KNOCK

KNOCK
COME IN.

HELLO, CHARLIE, IT'S ME, BURT WEISS.

YOU REMEMBER ME, DON'T YOU?

IT'S QUITE LATE, YOU KNOW.

I REALIZE THAT AND I'M SORRY...

I'M HERE ABOUT CARBUNKLE...

THEY'RE ONLY MISSING IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE TO LOOK.

WELL, CHARLIE, DO YOU KNOW WHERE TO LOOK?

WELL?

OOOOOKAY... HOW ABOUT THE LAST TIME YOU SAW CARBUNKLE?

I SAW HIM RECENTLY.

TODAY? YESTERDAY? LAST WEEK?

YES. THAT'S RIGHT.

WELL, WHICH IS IT?!

DON'T GET SHORT WITH ME YOU SON-OF-A-BITCH.

I'LL KNOCK THAT SMUG LOOK RIGHT OFF YOUR FUCKING FACE.

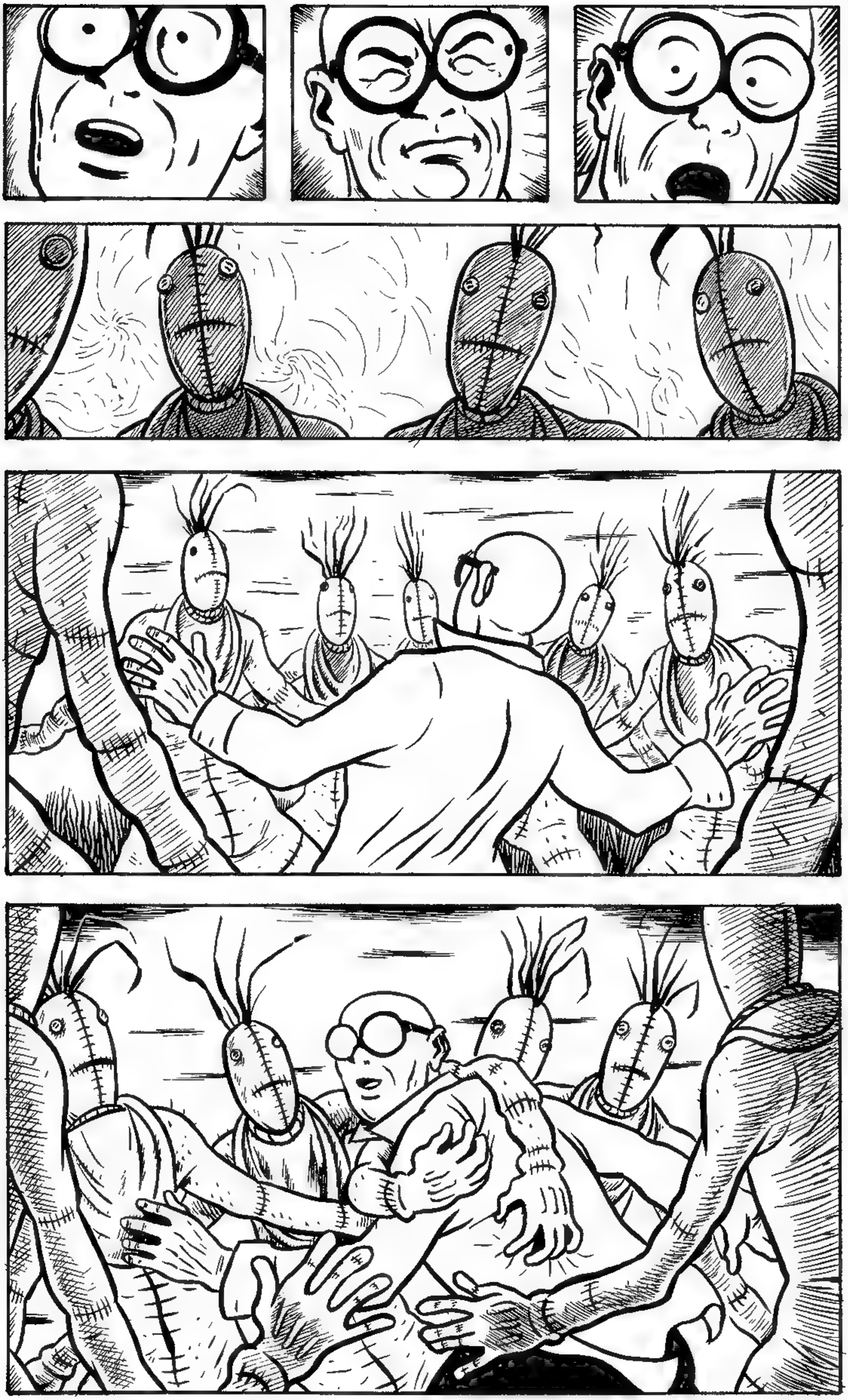
EASY, OLD TIMER!

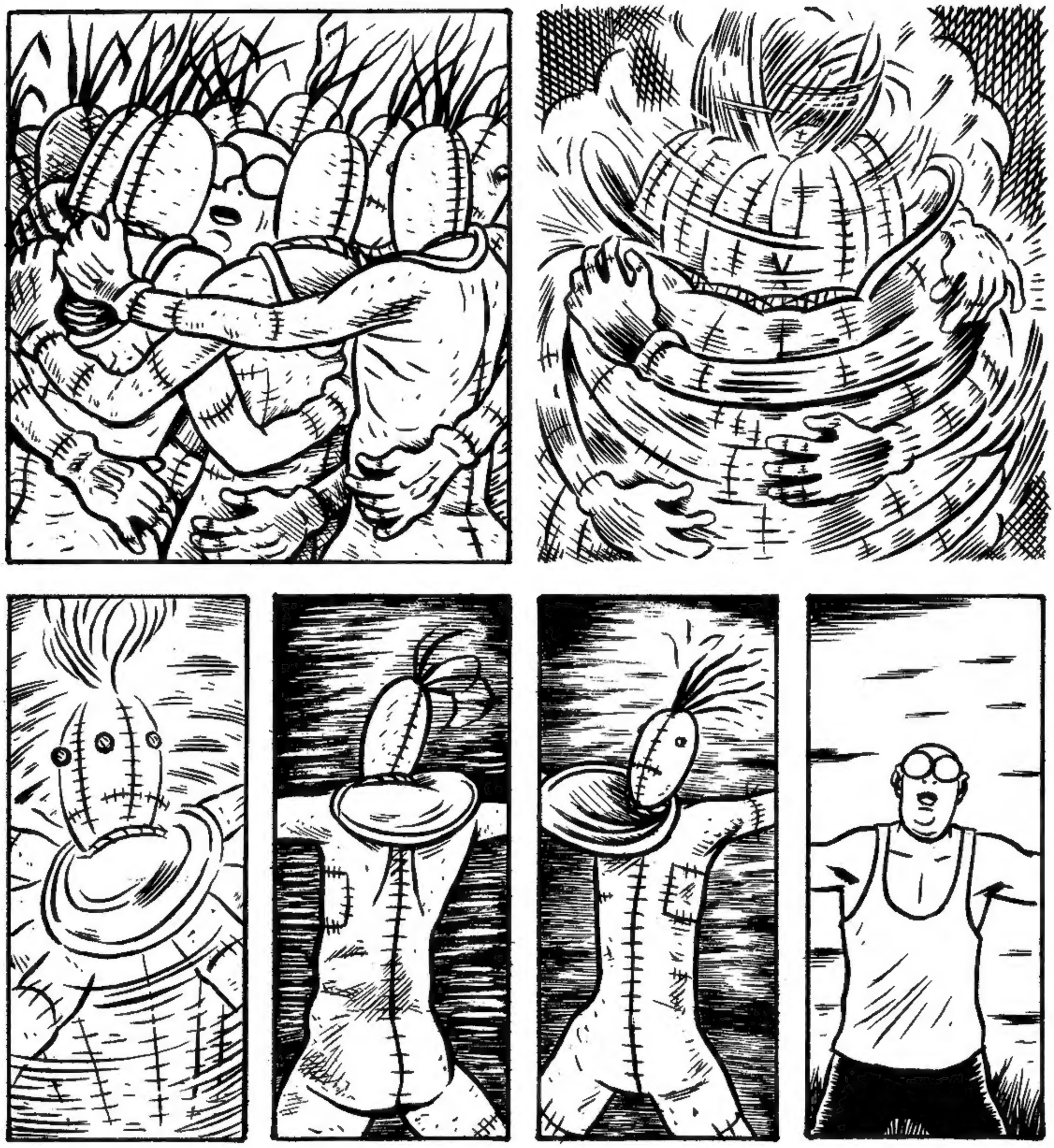
YOU THINK YOU'RE ANY BETTER THAN ANY OF US?!

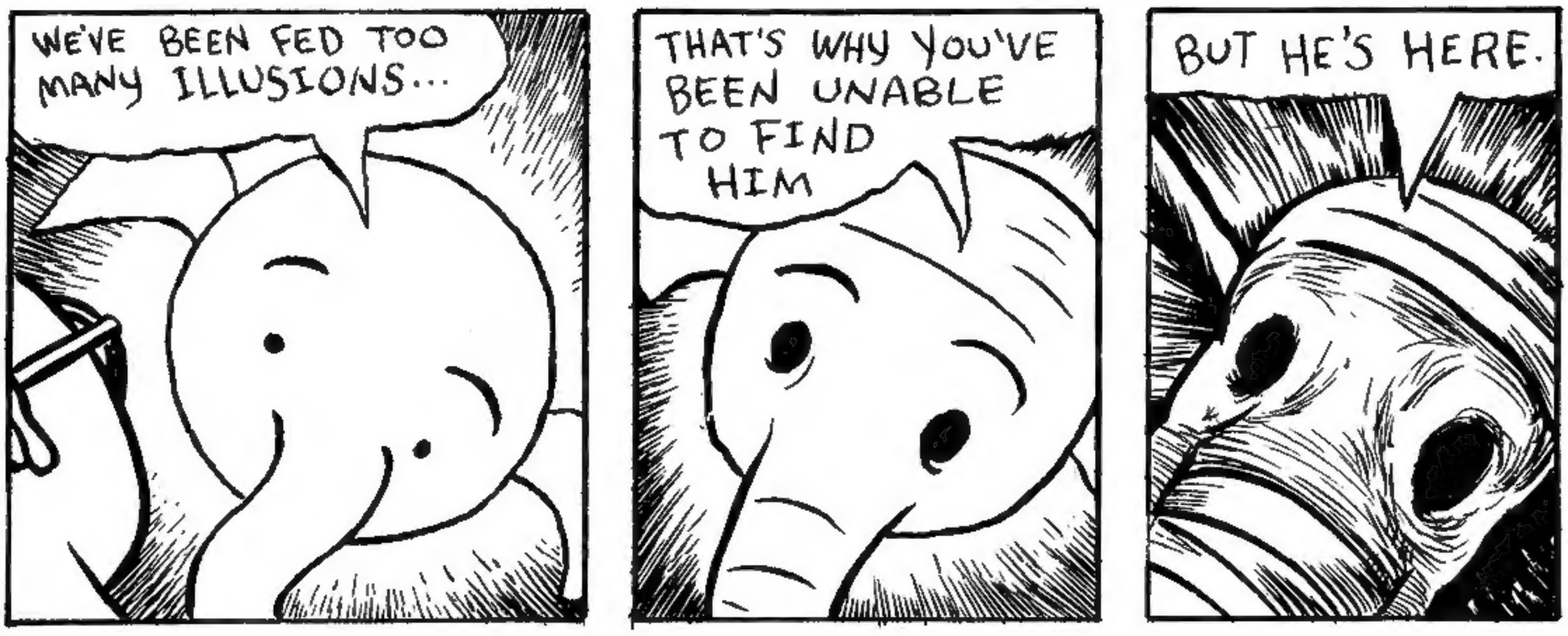
WE ALL BEAR WITNESS BUT REFUSE TO TESTIFY!

YOU DON'T JUST SEE WITH YOUR EYES, YOU SEE WITH YOUR GUTS!!

THAT'S WHY WE'RE ALL FUCKING BLIND.






WE'VE BEEN FED TOO MANY ILLUSIONS...
THAT'S WHY YOU'VE BEEN UNABLE TO FIND HIM
BUT HE'S HERE.
YOU KNEW ALL ALONG...
WHY DID YOU KEEP QUIET?
WHY HAVE YOU LIED?
WE'VE FALLEN TOO FAR.
HE'S BEYOND OUR REACH.
NO!
I KNOW WHAT I SAW. WHAT I FELT.
YOU'RE CERTAIN?
YES.

WHAT A FUCKIN' WORLD, HUH...

=SIGH=

C'MON GUYS, AN HOUR AGO WE THOUGHT CARBUNKLE WAS DEAD. AT LEAST HE'S ALIVE.

THAT'S SOMETHING TO BE GRATEFUL FOR.

IT'S ALMOST 6:30. I AM WIPED.

I COULD SLEEP FOR A YEAR AND A DAY.

ACCHH! A COUPLE CUPS OF JOE AND YOU GUYS WILL BE RARIN' TO GO.

HEY LOOK, THE SUN'S COMING UP. WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU WERE AWAKE FOR THAT?

That's all folks. Thanks to everybody who has offered encouragement over the past four years that it took to finish *the Cereal Killings*. Somewhere down the line I hope to publish a revised edition of *the Cereal Killings* in book form. Please address all correspondence to:
James Sturm • 5531 28th Avenue NE • Seattle, WA 98105